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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000210

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [MARR](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH'S CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP
STRESS UNITY AS DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE AGAINST MUTINEERS MOUNT

REF: A. DHAKA 207

[B](#). DHAKA 204

[C](#). DHAKA 161

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY
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[1](#)1. (C) Bangladesh's civilian and military leadership are working together to defuse tension within the Bangladesh Army following the February 25 - 26 Bangladesh Rifles Mutiny. During a late-night meeting February 27, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Army Chief General Moeen agreed to establish a special tribunal composed of civilian and military officials to judge those responsible for the atrocities. Disgruntled members of the army appear to be taking a wait and see approach as the government agrees to their demands. As the media reports the death toll rose to 81 with the discovery of additional mass graves February 28, plans were underway to bury the dead with full state honors and provide support to their family members. Most media outlets called for national unity and supported the Government's decision to hold those responsible for the murders accountable for their actions. Senior GOB officials have expressed appreciation for strong and consistent USG support during the crisis.

Civilian and Military Leadership Working To Defuse Tension
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[1](#)2. (C) Tension has risen within the army as the extent of the atrocities committed during the February 25 - 26 Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Mutiny became clear (ref a). Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Army Chief General Moeen Uddin Ahmed worked late into the night February 27 to respond to army concerns. During a two-hour meeting at the Prime Minister's residence, Moeen and senior uniformed colleagues briefed Hasina on complaints from within the officer corps regarding the GOB's response to the crisis. Sources privy to the discussions tell us that Hasina readily accepted Moeen's proposals that included both immediate steps to be taken by the GOB as well as a longer term plan for reconstituting the BDR. (Note: Hasina and Moeen were meeting again the afternoon of February 28, but we have yet to receive a readout of their discussion.)

Plans to Punish the Guilty...
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[1](#)3. (C) Following the February 27 meeting, Moeen and

Principal Staff Officer Lieutenant General Mubeen separately spoke with the press to emphasize unity between the civilian and military leadership. Mubeen announced the GOB's decision to establish a special tribunal to judge those accused of crimes. On February 28, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (ret'd) Tajul Islam told us he had assured a gathering of several hundred retired army officers that there would be speedy justice for those accused. This was echoed by the Prime Minister's Security Adviser, Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, who said that the GOB had made progress in identifying those who had actively participated in the killings.

and Honor the Dead

14. (C) During the day February 27, the GOB also announced a series of measures designed to honor those killed during the mutiny. The Army announced that it would provide surviving families with initial grants of \$6,000 from the Army Welfare Fund. The GOB announced three days of mourning for those killed and made preparations to bury the victims with full state honors. Funerals scheduled for midday February 28 were delayed after the discovery of additional mass graves on the BDR HQ compound. State Minister Islam stated there had been discussion of erecting a memorial to the dead on the grounds of the BDR HQ at Pilkhana.

Calls for National Unity to Overcome Crisis

15. (C) Most media reports the morning of February 28

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continued to praise the GOB for its handling of the crisis and call for national unity and mourning for the victims. The media welcomed the announcement of special tribunals and expressed full support for the principle that the guilty must be held accountable. Some criticized Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's February 27th criticism of the government which stood in contrast to her conciliatory message the previous day.

GOB Appreciation for USG Support

16. (C) State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Hasan Mahmud and other GOB officials called to express their appreciation for the strong USG support during the crisis. They gave thanks for the Ambassador's phone call to the Prime Minister February 26 and for an Embassy statement February 27 expressing support for the government. They likewise expressed appreciation for support from the United Kingdom and other international partners.

Comment

17. (C) The increase in tension within the security forces throughout the day February 27 was palpable, as the body count rose and electronic and print media reports of atrocities spread throughout the country, including eye witness and survivor accounts. This gave rise to considerable speculation about tension between the Army and civilian leadership, as well as within the army. As she has throughout the crisis, the Prime Minister worked with the Army leadership to respond to concerns from within the ranks. While emotions remain high, the government's timely actions have helped to contain the situation...for now. That said, anger, particularly on the part of junior and mid-level army officers, remains intense. The political, military, and civil society elites understand the stakes and the need for concerted action to bring the crisis to a conclusion.

MORIARTY